



2019-20

Annual Report

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Message from our chair



I am extremely pleased to introduce the Healthwatch Bexley Annual report 2019/20, which marks the end of my first year as the Chair of the Healthwatch Bexley Advisory Board.

Healthwatch Bexley provides an essential service to the residents, patients and service users of Bexley's Health and Social Care Services. Uniquely placed at a strategic level as an independent body that seeks to identify and represent the voice of local people, Healthwatch Bexley punches way above its weight in terms of representation, engagement, and impact.

Over the last year, I have been privileged to attend numerous strategic meetings including the Bexley Health and Wellbeing Board, Bexley Council Communities and Health Scrutiny Committees, and Local Care Partnership meetings run by the CCG. I have met with and discussed, local issues with senior decision-makers across the borough including the Council Chief Executive, Director of Public Health, Director of Adult Social Care and Health, lead councillors for Health and Social Care and senior staff at Bexley NHS Clinical Commissioning Group.

I have been very pleased to see the incredible level of respect and support that Healthwatch Bexley has developed over the years, all of which enables it to represent the local patient and public voice more effectively and impact change.

In addition, I am proud of the level of support and engagement from the Advisory Board, with members drawn from across the public and voluntary sector, representing patients, service users and local residents. Members ensure that Healthwatch Bexley has the resources it needs to operate and provide access to otherwise disadvantaged or unheard community voices.

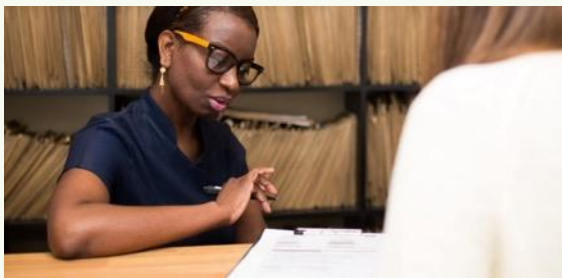
All of this has been achieved during a period of significant change in health and social care services, some positive, some less so, and during a time of stretched budgets nationally.

Despite the obvious challenges the next year is already presenting us with, I am pleased to be continuing in my role as Chair, and look forward to supporting the incredible work Healthwatch Bexley will be continuing in 2020/21.

Rikki Garcia
Chair, Healthwatch Bexley Advisory Board

Our priorities

Last year 3,019 people told us about their experience of a number of different areas of health and social care. Here are some of the changes that you want to see.



- Better access to GP appointments for all, including those with a learning disability and those who do not use technology.



- Older adults want help to stay in their own homes and support for family and friends that care for them.



- Better access to health information for British Sign Language users.



- Action to help decrease obesity levels in the borough. The Local Authorities Obesity Strategy was welcomed to address this.



- A six month trial of a dressing clinic hub at Queen Mary's Hospital was a welcome choice for residents who needed a post-operative dressing changed. Residents wanted the hub to continue after the trial period ended.



- Clearer, faster pathways into Mental Health, especially children, young people and those with special needs, disabilities and autism.

About us

Here to make care better

The network's collaborative effort around the NHS Long Term Plan shows the power of the Healthwatch network in giving people that find it hardest to be heard a chance to speak up. The #WhatWouldYouDo campaign saw national movement, engaging with people all over the country to see how the Long Term Plan should be implemented locally. Thanks to the thousands of views shared with Healthwatch we were also able to highlight the issue of patient transport not being included in the NHS Long Term Plan review – sparking a national review of patient transport from NHS England.

We simply could not do this without the dedicated work and efforts from our staff and volunteers and of course, we couldn't have done it without you. Whether it's working with your local Healthwatch to raise awareness of local issues, or sharing your views and experiences, I'd like to thank you all. It's important that services continue to listen, so please do keep talking to your local Healthwatch. Let's strive to make the NHS and social care services the best that they can be.

 I've now been Chair of Healthwatch England for over a year and I'm extremely proud to see it go from strength to strength, highlighting the importance of listening to people's views to decision makers at a national and local level.

Sir Robert Francis,
Healthwatch England Chair





Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for you.

People want health and social care support that works – helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



Our purpose

To find out what matters to you and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.



Our approach

People's views come first – especially those who find it hardest to be heard.

We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- Visiting services to see how they work
- Running surveys and focus groups
- Going out in the community and working with other organisations



Find out more about us and the work we do

Website: www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk

Twitter: @HWBexley

Facebook: [Facebook.com/Healthwatch Bexley](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchBexley)

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2019-20.



Health and care that works for you



21 volunteers

Helping to carry out our work. In total, they gave up 452 hours of their time.

We employed

3 part-time staff

Which is the equivalent of 2.1 full time staff.

We received

£100,000 in funding

from our local authority in 2019-20, the same as the previous year.

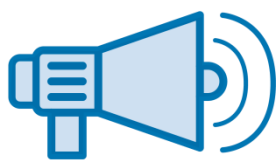
Providing support



3,019 people

shared their health and social care story with us, 95% more than last year.

Reaching out



4,920 people

engaged with us at community events and groups, libraries, hospitals and shopping centres.

2,379 people

engaged with us through social media.

Making a difference to care



We published

13 reports

about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care.

We carried out

4 enter and view visits

How we've made a difference





Obesity Strategy

25% of reception children and almost 2 out of 3 adults in Bexley are obese or overweight


We were pleased to be asked by Public Health Bexley to be part of a 12 week consultation looking at resident's views of the local draft Obesity Strategy.

Using questionnaires, focus groups and face to face engagement we listened to over 800 people. We visited a secondary school, local BAME groups, carers groups for adults and young people, and groups with learning disabilities or specific health conditions, ensuring those often less heard, had a chance to comment.

People told us they were shocked at the local levels of obesity and agreed that action needed to be taken to stop levels increasing. Our findings have been used to inform and support the adoption of the strategy by Bexley Council.

Our recommendations were based on what Bexley residents told us and included, that the Strategy could give more consideration to those with mental ill-health.

The Obesity Strategy is seen as a positive step by local residents in addressing the growing problem of obesity. Rather than blaming individuals or just prompting them to make healthier choices, it recognises the need for a whole system approach and looks at the many complex influences affecting a person's choices. Including changes to the built environment and supporting a community culture that sees healthy eating and exercise as the norm.

 The cycle of medication, mental health issues and lack of insight and understanding all contribute to obesity and are overlooked.



Share your views with us

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

Website: www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk

Telephone: 0208 304 9344 or 07506 104750

Email: info@healthwatchbexley.co.uk



Audiology services

We engaged with Bexley residents with hearing loss to find out about local audiology services. Working with local service providers, we conducted four enter and view visits and a questionnaire was promoted via a local deaf centre, at community groups and events, and on social media.

The majority of people were happy with the service and aftercare they received. However, only half were happy with their hearing aids, meaning they did not wear them regularly and get the benefits of improved communication associated with regular use. 30% told us they experienced loneliness as they couldn't hear enough to join in conversations with family or friends.

Despite many local services providing a hearing loop, such as hospitals and banks, half of the people we listened to didn't know what a hearing loop was, how to use it or if their hearing aid had one.

Our recommendations suggested that service providers promote the importance and use of hearing loops and check patient understanding at all appointments.

Service providers should also collect patient experience feedback, paying particular attention to why patients may not be happy with or wearing their hearing aid.

Our recommendations have received positive feedback from service providers.

Thank you again for your incredible work in producing this report and for the opportunity to improve in areas that really matter to patients.

Specsavers Manager, Bexleyheath

Healthwatch Network Awards

Healthwatch Bexley was recognised and awarded highly commended in the Championing Diversity and Inclusion category at the 2019 Healthwatch Network Awards.

We worked with local organisations to help make going to the GP a better experience for people with a learning disability. We trained 15 volunteers with a learning disability to visit all 26 GP services in the borough and speak to patients about their experiences.

Over 450 people shared their views, which included concerns about issues such as a lack of disability awareness amongst staff, and information provided in formats people find difficult to understand.

As a result of our work, there is now a GP dedicated to advising GP practices in the area about learning disabilities and three healthcare professionals responsible for

increasing the number of people having their annual health check.

Also, several GP services have taken steps to make their staff more learning disability aware to help reduce the barriers people with learning disabilities face.

You can read the full report by visiting our website www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk

Through the work that Healthwatch have done it has led us to us being commissioned by the CCG to offer learning disability awareness training to GP surgery staff throughout the borough and paid employment to 5 Mencap members to deliver this.

Jane Menzies, Mencap



Long Term Plan

#WhatWouldYouDo

Highlights



More than 278 people shared their views with Healthwatch Bexley.



Healthwatch Bexley held 4 focus groups reaching carers for people with mental health issues and groups with learning difficulties.



We visited hospitals, schools, community groups and shopping centres with our survey.

NHS Long Term Plan

Following a commitment from the Government to increase investment in the NHS, the NHS published the 'Long Term Plan' in January 2019, setting out its' key ambitions over the next 10 years. Healthwatch launched a countrywide campaign and questionnaire to give people a say in how the plan should be implemented in their communities.

We scheduled several focus groups across the borough for people with learning disabilities and also for carers caring for people with mental health issues.

Working with Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark Healthwatch we asked people #WhatWouldYouDo to improve the NHS locally. The top issues that people told us they wanted services to focus on is:

- Access to the help and treatment I need when I want it.
- Professionals that listen to me when I speak to them about my concerns.
- Easy access to the information I need to help me make decisions about my health and care.

The report was presented to stakeholders and has been used to shape the Local Authority Obesity and Prevention Strategies and the development of local Primary Care Networks.

Read the full report on our website
www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk

Helping you find the answers



Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

This year we helped people get the advice and information they need by:

- Providing advice and information articles on our website and through social media.
- Answering people's queries about services over the phone, by email, or online.
- Talking to people at community events such as the annual London Borough of Bexley Ageing Well event and Welling Fun Day.
- Visiting hospitals, shopping centres and libraries.
- Producing a British Sign Language signposting directory.

Here are some of the areas that people asked about.



GP's and
Hospitals



Mental Health Services



Social Care



How to make a
complaint



Learning
Disabilities



Deafness and
Hearing Loss



Free NHS Health Checks

Healthwatch Bexley worked with Public Health Bexley to explore why local residents aged 40-74 years of age were not utilising the offer of free NHS Health Checks.

Healthwatch staff and volunteers worked hard listening to over 500 residents about the health checks and barriers to accessing them. We visited Leisure Centres, Shopping Centres and Supermarkets to listen to residents and raise awareness.

We prioritised BAME groups such as a local Asian women's group holding focus groups and providing them with information and a questionnaire in an additional language.

Our findings showed that there was a lack of knowledge around these health checks. Eligible residents were not being consistently invited for their free health check. We identified that accessibility often proved an issue, due to the checks being carried out in a GP surgery.

Our recommendations suggested a marketing campaign by London Borough of Bexley to ensure the profile and importance of the health checks are maximised across all stakeholders in

Bexley, including promoting in the Bexley Magazine.

The health checks could be made more accessible, by using alternative providers other than a GP, for example local leisure centres.

We also suggested that GP practices in the borough ensure they follow local and NHS guidelines which helps the practice operate a call/recall process making sure that all eligible patients are invited to have a NHS Health Check once every five years.

Since our report, the free NHS Health Checks have been promoted on bill-boards throughout the borough and in the Bexley Magazine.

Read the full report on our website www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk

My health check was worthwhile, it showed my cholesterol was slightly high which I wasn't aware of. If I had not attended my health check this could have gone unnoticed resulting in further complications.



Healthy Start vouchers

The Healthwatch team became aware that approximately £150,000 a year in Bexley is not claimed under the Healthy Start voucher scheme and worked with Public Health Bexley to find out why. The scheme provides vouchers for eligible families to buy fruit, vegetables, milk and vitamins to help kickstart healthy eating habits.

We went to 19 groups and locations throughout the borough, which included parent and child groups, baby clinics, children's centres, hospitals, food banks, job centres and events such as community fun days. We spoke to over 250 families looking at barriers to applying for and using the vouchers.

We found that there was a lack of knowledge for parents around the voucher scheme. We identified that it was not always being regularly publicised and advertised at key venues such as nurseries, children's centres and food banks. Vitamins needed to be made more accessible across the borough to those eligible. Midwives, health visitors, nurseries, childminders and even GP's would benefit from regular informal updates and reminders from London Borough of Bexley to promote the Healthy

Start scheme and advise parents how to take advantage of the benefits.

We explained and promoted the scheme and if families needed help, we helped them to apply.

We presented our findings in September 2019 at the Bexley Councils Healthy Start Re-launch event.

Knowledge of the Healthy Start scheme has been raised by a local authority poster campaign throughout the borough and as of March 2020, the uptake rate for Healthy Start vouchers and vitamins was 55% in the London Borough of Bexley. This has remained stable since September 2019, whereas London has seen a decrease and currently stands at 52%.

Midwives at both Queen Marys and Darent Valley Hospitals have given positive feedback and vitamins are now being given out regularly, with no issues regarding supply.

Read the full report on our website www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk

Big Health Check Day 2019

The Big Health Check Day took place in October 2019. It was organised by Lewisham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and was aimed at residents with learning disabilities, their families and carers in Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham, the 3 local Healthwatch organisations were also involved.

Over 300 people took part in the day and Healthwatch representatives spoke to 51 people about 'Looking after Your Mental Health', via a short questionnaire.

Through speaking to people at the event we were informed that not all mental health services meet the needs of a person with a learning disability. Some services are difficult to access. Seeing a GP was the main source of mental health support for people with a learning disability.

Many people kept themselves mentally well by spending time with family and friends or taking part in leisure or fun activities.

The majority of people we spoke to wanted better support to make healthy life choices. They also wanted more accessible information on how to stay healthy and what leisure and volunteering opportunities are available in the local area.

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 we are waiting to follow up the recommendations and results of this piece of work.

 I would like to see more mental health services for people with learning difficulties.





Safeguarding Concern:

Mrs A did not feel supported or listened to as a carer for her husband and brother-in-law. Her brother-in-law lives alone and she had wellbeing concerns

With our support Mrs A was able to raise a safeguarding concern with the local authority. We also suggested local support groups that she could access. As a result her brother-in-law now has a social worker.



GP Complaint:

Mrs B, a young mum, approached us in a local library. She had contacted us previously regarding problems she was experiencing with a GP at her local practice. We advised her to put her concerns in writing to the practice manager, which resulted in a meeting where all her issues were resolved.

She thanked us for all of our help and for listening to her.



Hospital Comment:

Mr B, 84, was taken to hospital after passing out. He suffers with Parkinson's. He spent 7 hours overnight in A & E, in a cold room, sitting in an uncomfortable wheelchair, with no access to hot drinks, TV or reading materials. He wanted to comment on his experience so it could be improved for others. We raised his concerns with the local CCG and hospital trust. He received a response acknowledging that he should not have been left in the waiting area for so long. He was very happy with the response.



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health or social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch Bexley is here for you.

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Volunteers



At Healthwatch Bexley we are supported by 21 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what people would like to improve, to services in their communities.

This year our volunteers:


- Raised awareness of the work we do at events, in the community and with health and care services.
- Visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- Helped support our day-to-day running.
- Listened to people's experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on.

Our Volunteers

Our volunteers play a vital role in speaking to local people about their experiences and giving them the opportunities to share their views and ideas for how services can improve. Many of our volunteers spend time in our community finding out what people think of local services in Bexley and raising awareness of Healthwatch Bexley.

We train our volunteers to visit health and social services and report on people's experiences. They may be observing a service, gathering views of patients, residents and staff or contributing to reports which highlight our findings.



 Volunteering with Healthwatch Bexley has been rewarding in so many ways. It has given me the confidence to engage members of the public in conversation about their health and social care experiences and I have made some great friendships with the Healthwatch team. I am happy to give my time to such a worthwhile function which is instrumental in improving health and wellbeing outcomes of Bexley residents.



Volunteer with us

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch at Healthwatch Bexley.

Website: www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk

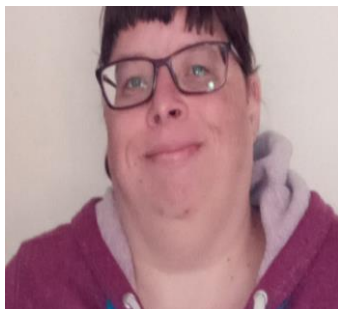
Telephone: 0208 304 9344 or 07506 104750

Email: info@healthwatchbexley.co.uk

Our volunteers

We could not do what we do without the support of our amazing volunteers. Meet some of the team and hear what they get up to.

Sam



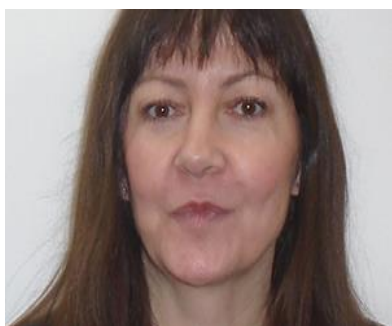
I enjoy visiting the GP surgeries because I am learning new things and finding out about patient experiences. I enjoy going to the hospitals and other places to do surveys and I enjoy working with Jo and the other staff in the team. I like meeting the other volunteers and new people with Jo's support. I am over the moon to be part of the Healthwatch volunteer team

Joan



I joined the small, friendly team of Healthwatch Bexley in 2019. I volunteered firstly within a library setting, talking to members of the public about Healthwatch and sign posting to other Bexley Agencies if the need arose. Since then, I have volunteered within Bexleyheath Shopping Centre, leisure complexes and Urgent Care Centres to name a few. Variety is the spice of life as they say! I enjoy talking to people and have discovered people are all different, yet, they have one thing in common; they like to be listened to - as a Healthwatch Volunteer, I am that ear.

Sharon

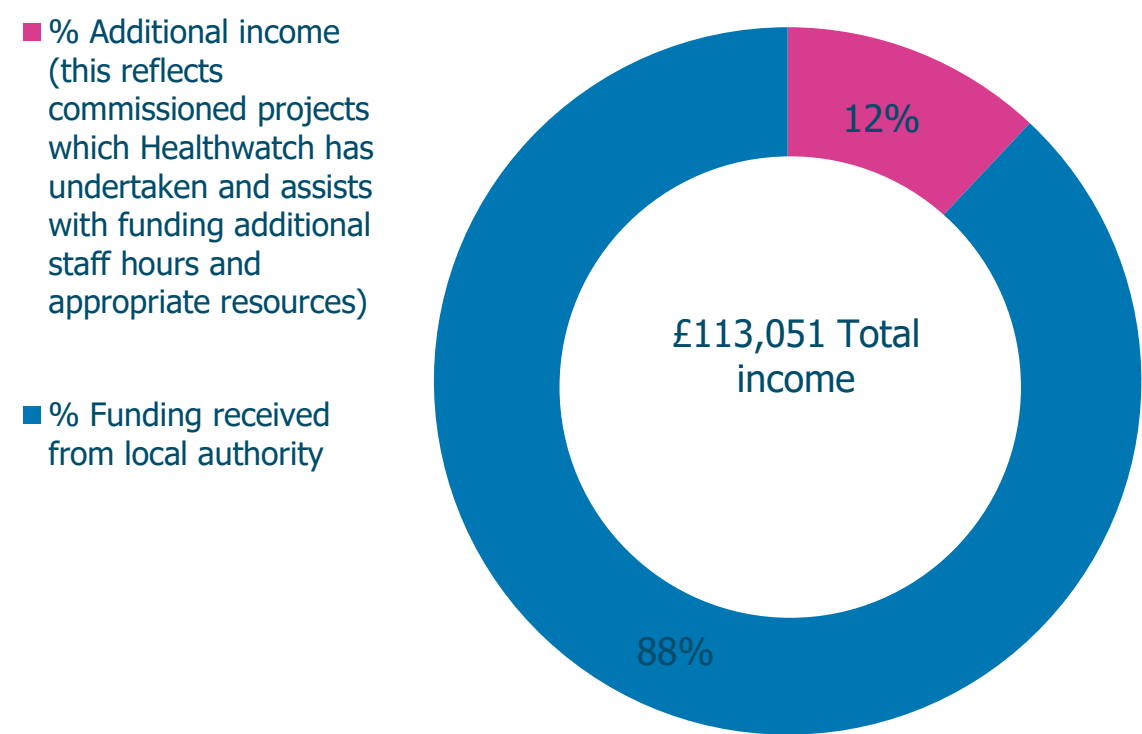
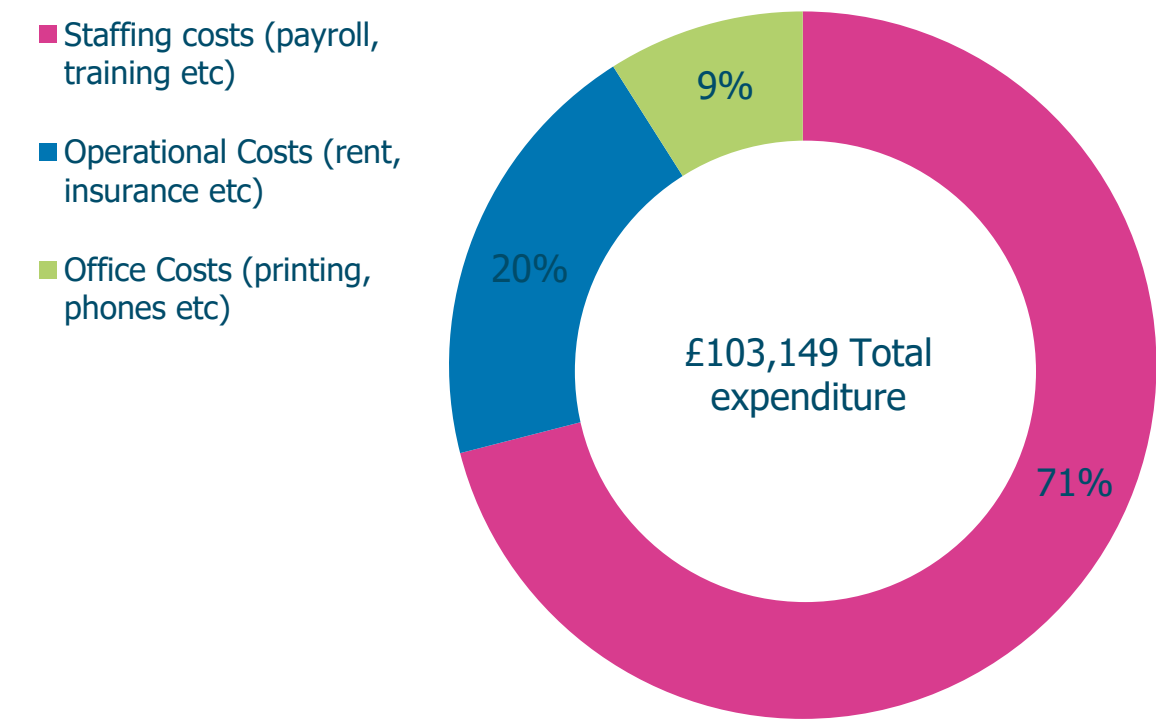


I chose to volunteer for Healthwatch Bexley as I have an extreme interest in health and social care and enjoy meeting and helping people within the local community. I was also looking for an interesting, proactive and varied role. As Healthwatch Bexley work mostly within the heart of the community, I find my role very rewarding and fulfilling. Over the past year I have visited a range of settings, including; libraries, hospitals, sports centres, local groups and foodbanks in order to raise knowledge of Healthwatch Bexley and to gather views from Bexley residents on a variety of health-related issues. There is a fantastic dedicated staff team at Healthwatch Bexley and I feel genuinely proud to be able support them.

Finances



We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we spent £103,149.



Our plans for next year



Changes for the future

From the 1st April, the six Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in South East London, who are responsible for planning and buying our healthcare services and making sure that we have good provision of care, all merged to form a new CCG at the regional level. This new joint CCG covering Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark is called South East London CCG (www.selondonccg.nhs.uk).

Healthwatch Bexley along with the other five Healthwatch in South East London (Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark) from day one wanted to make sure that what people are telling us is part of the new planning, monitoring and commissioning of services.

To support us we appointed Folake Segun as Director, South East London Healthwatch. Folake began on 1st April and is working with Healthwatch Bexley to create collective impact and to push the inclusion of local people's views and needs in decision making.

We are going through unprecedented times, with rapid changes rolled out across health and social care. During the lockdown period and over the next few months and years, you may have to use services differently. Your feedback is as important as ever to get things right. Please do get in touch with us (contact details) and encourage your friends and family to share their experience too – so that we can make care better for borough residents and everyone in South East London.



www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk



**0208 304 9344 or
07506 104750**



info@healthwatchbexley.co.uk



A message from our Manager

Looking ahead

Our priorities for the coming year will be:

- Digital Exclusion
- Mental Health
- The impact of Covid-19 on Bexley residents.
- Inequalities in health and social care

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a big impact on people's lives. For some people their mental health has been affected as they have lost loved ones or experienced isolation and fear. It has affected the way we live, work and access health and social care services, with many services increasingly using technology as a means of communication. Whilst digital communication is a positive step for many, we appreciate that not all Bexley residents have access to or use technology.

To ensure equality and influence service provision, we will be listening to resident's views and experiences on the use of technology to access health and social care services, access to mental health services and the experiences of those living in or with loved ones in care homes.

We are looking forward to continuing our work with the most vulnerable and seldom heard groups in the community and are pleased to have developed a good relationship with local BAME groups, carers groups, food banks, the deaf community and learning disability support groups. We appreciate your help and cooperation throughout the past year and hope this continues in the future.

Thank you

We were pleased to have been commissioned by the Public Health Team at the local authority to work with them on local issues and consultations such as the Obesity and Prevention Strategies. We appreciate their continued support and welcome the opportunity to work with them again in the coming year.



We will watch with interest the continued development of Adult Social Care, the new South East London (SEL) Clinical Commissioning Group, which came into effect in April 2020 and of Primary Care Networks. Attending meetings at both SEL and local level to ensure the voices of local people are heard and used to influence service provision locally. Thank you for allowing us to share with you the views of local people and allowing them to have a voice in decision making.

A big thank you to our small group of volunteers who have been invaluable in helping us to reach out to Bexley residents. We simply could not have completed our ambitious work plan without them.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Advisory Board who support and guide us in all that we do.

My special thanks go to the Healthwatch Bexley Team. Jo has continued her work ensuring those with a Learning Disability have a voice and Sarah has increased our social media presence and worked tirelessly on our new Healthwatch website. I look forward to working with you in the year to come.

Jayne Garfield-Field, Manager Healthwatch Bexley

Thank you

Thank you to everyone that is helping us put people at the heart of social care, including:

- Members of the public who shared their views and experiences with us.
- All of our amazing staff and volunteers.
- The voluntary organisations and community groups that have contributed to our work.
- Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Bexley Council, Adult Social Care and Public Health Bexley.
- Local NHS Trusts and providers including UTC at Erith and Queen Marys Hospital 's.
- Bexley Primary Care services.



And finally...

In March 2020, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Healthwatch Bexley had to make some extreme changes to the way we worked. We all decamped from our office and moved to a work from home strategy.

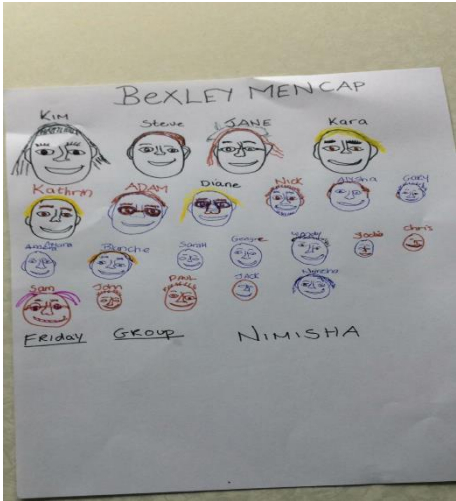
We have continued to be in contact with all the organisations we have worked with in the past, either by telephone, email or zoom video calls, offering our support, advice and signposting. Along with the Local Authority and Bexley Voluntary Service, we have also been carrying out shopping trips and prescription collections for vulnerable members of our community.

One of the organisations we work closely with, 'Bexley Mencap' have been keeping busy during the lockdown, with daily quizzes, keep fit classes and art challenges.

Here is a selection of photos we have chosen, that show how their members have been dealing with the challenge of 'Stay Alert, Control the Virus, Stay Safe' and also their 'Thank You' to all the NHS, Care and Key workers.







Contact us

Healthwatch Bexley
2a Devonshire Road,
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Contact number: 020 8303 9344 or 07506 104750

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Facebook – [Facebook.com/Healthwatch Bexley](https://www.facebook.com/Healthwatch Bexley)

Instagram - [hwatchbexley](https://www.instagram.com/hwatchbexley)

The organisation that manages Healthwatch Bexley:

Mind in Bexley
2a Devonshire Road,
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Kent DA6 8DS

Contact number: 020 8303 8932

Email address: info@mindinbexley.org.uk

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you need this in an alternative format please contact us.

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